DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 280 134 EA 019 237

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TITLE Performance Appraisal Systems for Teachers.
PUB DATE Apr 86
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 16-20, 1986). Document contains light type.
AVAILABLE FROM Publication Sales, Organizational Analysis & Practice, 120 East Buffalo Street, Ithaca, NY 14850 ($5.00; quantity discounts).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Administrators; Career Ladders; Elementary Secondary Education; Merit Pay; *Personnel Evaluation; *Professional Recognition; Promotion (Occupational); Skill Development; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher Evaluation

ABSTRACT

Pay-for-performance measures and reward systems for teachers fail to consider the role of performance appraisal and give too little attention to how changes in performance appraisal and reward systems affect organizational processes, such as interteacher cooperation and teacher-administrator relations. Presented are three strategic considerations that should be reviewed before implementing a performance appraisal system in school systems: the basis of performance appraisal (skills versus work outputs), the effects of linkages between performance appraisal and organizational rewards, and the nature of work interdependence. For each, implications for the structure of performance appraisal systems are examined. Performance appraisal is defined as a process occurring over time; a proposed structure calls for a focus on skill development during the pretenure period. Cooperation between school administrators and a team of teacher peers in the decision to grant tenure is emphasized. A diagram of the proposed structure of a teacher performance appraisal system and 20 references are included. (WTH)

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ED280134

Paper to be presented to 1986
AERA Convention, San Francisco

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Performance Appraisal Systems for Teachers

The recent reform effort has concentrated heavily on career ladders and merit pay as a primary mechanism for re-invigorating our educational system. These pay for performance measures, while attractive on the surface, have for the most part failed to consider the role of performance appraisal. All of these plans involve linking performance appraisals of individual teachers to some form of organizational reward (e.g., salary increases, promotions). In general, there has been too little attention given to how changes in performance appraisal and reward systems affect other organizational processes, such as inter-teacher cooperation and teacher-administrator relations.

While these issues have emerged in the private sector and have been the subject of work by major organizational theorists (e.g., Porter, Lawler and Hackman, 1975; Meyer, Kay and French, 1965), educators have largely ignored the lessons this research has to offer.

The purpose of this paper is to bring to the attention of educators the importance of strategic considerations that have been too long ignored. The paper presents three strategic considerations that should be reviewed before implementing a performance appraisal system in school systems: the basis of performance appraisal (skills vs. work outputs), the effects of linkages between performance appraisal and organizational rewards, and the nature of work interdependence. For each of these, we examine their <u>implications</u> for the structure of performance appraisal systems.

Strategic Considerations for Performance Appraisal

Consideration One: Basis for Performance Appraisal - Skills vs. Output

Performance can be appraised on the basis of skills or on the basis of work outputs. In education, output is most often assessed by examining student test scores. Assessment of teachers' skills, on the other hand, is usually made based on some combination of formal and informal observations of classroom performance. It is critical that we determine whether measures of output or measures of skills should be the primary focus of appraisal. To do so, we must examine the issue of validity.

Validity has to do with the relevance of a measure in assessing what it intends to measure. In this context, one must consider the relevance of student outputs or skills in assessing teacher performance.

With regards to work outputs, there are serious questions about the validity of student test scores as a measure of teacher performance. Many other factors account for variation in student learning besides teacher performance. The academic ability of students assigned to a class can vary markedly from year to year, a district's curriculum may change, or a teacher may be assigned additional duties or have less support staff (Bacharach, Lipsky and Shedd, 1984).

It is important to stress that validity is not the same as objectivity. Merit pay proponents argue that student outputs

should be used because of their high objectivity. The argument here, however, is that objectivity is of little use if the measure is not valid.

While output measures may indeed be objective, they are affected by multiple factors, only one of which is the individual teaching component. For performance appraisal to be successful, and for those being appraised to be motivated and challenged by the appraisal, employees must have a sense that they can directly impact the criteria against which they are being measured. This is not true of the output measures that are being proposed currently as the basis for performance appraisals in our educational system.

While teachers may not have total control over output, they do have control over their skill development, provided they are given appropriate resources (Mitchell, 1986). A performance appraisal in a school system should help assure that all students are serviced by the most skilled teachers. And while recognizing that teachers' skills may not be a sufficient condition for the assurance of quality education, it should be assured that it is not an obstacle. Therefore, greater emphasis should be placed on assessing teacher performance in terms of their skills.

The greatest criticism of skill-assessments based on observations of teacher performance is that they tend to be subjective because they primarily rely on the appraiser's judgements about teacher performance. It is true that any type of skill assessment will be somewhat subjective. Why this is true is revealed if we examine the nature of teaching. Teaching

is not a job that involves the routine application of a clearly-defined set of procedures to a clear and predictable set of situations or problems. It involves the exercise of judgment in inherently ambiguous situations. Because the basic activity of teaching is problem solving, a value-free, non-judgemental assessment system is precluded by the nature of the teaching process itself.

Therefore, while skills involving problem solving and decision-making are the most difficult aspects of performance to measure, they are also the aspects of teaching that are most relevant to teaching performance. Shedd and Malinowski's (1986) recent study of the nature of teachers' work showed that teachers make a variety of decisions on a daily -- even hourly -- basis. Specifically, teaching decisions are directed to teaching roles, or the purposes of teaching (i.e., management, instruction and counseling decisions), and the teaching process (i.e., planning, implementation and evaluation decisions). Indeed, as Mosston (1972) observes, the notion of teaching as a decision-making process is the "one statement that is true and universal, and can therefore serve as the base for understanding and description" of the job of teaching.

In sum, if a school district is trying to create a system of performance appraisal which motivates and challenges teachers, and which focuses on elements of performance that teachers can change, then assessments of skills appear to be an appropriate basis of performance appraisal. In addition, assessments of skills are potentially more valid than are work outputs in the

sense that they can tap the decision-making process that is at the heart of teaching. To the degree that a performance appraisal system ignores the problem solving skills that are most important in characterizing teaching, it will not yield an accurate "picture" of a teachers' performance, nor will it help teachers improve their performance. That is: **Performance appraisal in education should place a greater emphasis on skills than on work outputs.**

Implication: Skill Development

To the degree that a performance appraisal system is designed to focus on skills, "formative" appraisal (appraisal for the purpose of development) should receive primary emphasis. Such an emphasis on formative appraisal would require school districts to examine how teachers go about acquiring their skills. There is evidence that teachers acquire their decision--making and problem solving skills by "being teachers" -- by repeatedly confronting and resolving for themselves the practical problems of managing a classroom (Lortie, 1975). Formative appraisal can help teachers make sense out of those experiences by helping them develop a "habit of inquiry," where they form questions about their practice (Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann, 1985). That process of questioning through observation helps teachers become better decision-makers.

Unfortunately, most school districts do not have mechanisms in place for that type of development to occur (Bacharach, Conley and Shedd, 1986). Currently, the pre-tenure period does

little to help teachers acquire the skills they need; teachers are left to acquire their decision-making skills largely on their own. If districts took formative appraisal seriously, they might specify the pre-tenure period as an intensive period of skill development. During this developmental period, formative appraisors could help teachers acquire decision-making and problem solving skills. Specifically, their purpose would be to provide teachers with diagnostic tools so that teachers may monitor, evaluate and strengthen their own performance.[1] However, this is not meant to imply that skill development ends with tenure; other developmental periods can follow tenure (Conley, 1986).

Consideration Two: Effects of Linkages Between Performance Appraisal and Organizational Rewards

The previous section stressed the need to focus on formative appraisal; the actual linkage of performance appraisal to organizational rewards requires some type of summative appraisal. Summative appraisal is an overall, summary judgement of an employees performance, and is conducted for the purpose of making some type of personnel decision. In this context, when performance appraisal is linked to organizational rewards, it is the summative component of the appraisal that serves as the basis of reward allocation.

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[1]For an illustration of a system designed to provide teachers with diagnostic information concerning their decision-making skills, see Shedd, J. and Malanowski, R. "Criteria and Standards for Career Development Systems," Organizational Analysis and Practice, Inc., Ithaca, NY.

In the private sector, organizations attempt to link rewards to performance appraisal for the purpose of increasing the extrinsic motivation of workers. The extent to which this effect is produced consistently is a point of debate in the literature (Deci, 1976; Lawler, 1977; Lepper and Greene, 1978).

In education, the current reforms of merit pay and career ladders have focused on two different types of rewards. Merit pay, which focuses on measuring work outputs, tends to reward performance with temporary fluctuations in pay, such as bonuses. Career ladders, to the degree that they focus on assessing skills, tend to reward employees with relatively permanent promotions.[2] In general, promotions are more appropriate when an organization wishes to reward levels of skill and proficiency that have been acquired over a period of time. Thus, the decision to grant organizational rewards, i.e., promotions, would turn on the level of skill that a teacher has acquired in teaching.

However, we know all too well from the private and public sector that whenever an organization tries to draw a linkage between performance appraisal and rewards such as promotion several problems emerge. One of the problems is that most organizations try to combine formative and summative appraisal in a single session (Wight, 1986). When important organizational

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2It is important to note that in such a system we would recommend that promotion be based on skills, not job tasks. The majority of "career ladders" currently being proposed in education link promotion to specific job duties, not skills. See Bacharach, S., Conley, S. and Shedd, J. Beyond career ladders: structuring teacher career development systems. Teachers College Record, Summer 1986.

rewards depend on the results of this type of performance appraisal, however, the organization has a dual goal: to obtain counseling and planning information about individuals for formative appraisal; and to obtain information to base rewards on for summative appraisal. Individuals also have a dual goal: to obtain valid performance feedback, and, at the same time, to obtain important extrinsic rewards, i.e., promotions. These dual goals of individuals and organizations tend to conflict with each other (Porter, et. al, 1975).

Another source of potential conflict in performance appraisal is the common practice of using the same person(s) to conduct formative and summative appraisals. Such a system places the appraiser in the dual role of "coaching" individuals for formative improvement and making summative judgements of their performance.

Thus, potential conflicts in performance appraisal arise out of two separate issues: 1) the combination of formative and summative appriasal in a single session; and 2) the use of the same person(s) to conduct formative and summative appraisal. To the degree that these conflicts close off communication between teachers and those who appraise their performance, appraisers cannot make accurate assessments of performance, and teachers cannot receive important performance feedback. Thus:

If schools attempt to link the results of performance appraisal to organizational rewards, they should attempt to reduce the potential conflicts which result from that linkage.

Implication: Reducing Conflicts in Performance Appraisal

One way to resolve potential conflicts in performance appraisal is to separate formative and summative appraisal processes. As noted previously, formative appraisal might take place during a specified period of skill development (such as the pre-tenure period). Following this period of formative appraisal, the summative appraisal to promote a teacher would focus on whether or not particular teaching skills have been acquired.

A second way to resolve potential conflicts in performance appraisal would be to specify that the person(s) who serves as formative appraiser(s) should not be the same person(s) who makes summative judgements, i.e., promotion decisions. In such a system, while the formative appraiser(s) might play a role in advocating the teacher's promotion if he/she decides an individual teacher is ready for promotion, the person(s) who serves as summative appraiser would retain the final authority for promotion decisions.[3]

The question of who should serve as formative and summative appraisers in school districts requires that we consider another aspect of the nature of teaching, and that is the nature of work interdependence.

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[3]See Bernardin and Beatty's (1984) description of multiple-step processes for decision-making in performance appraisal. The process removes the responsibility of "final evaluation" (e.g., merit pay) from the immediate supervisor and places it with a higher-level manager or supervisor. The rationale is similar to the rationale provided here: "the immediate supervisor's efforts may be directed towards a strict description of performance and career development." However, our proposal that formative appraisers act as advocates for individuals differs in that it casts formative evaluators in a slightly more active role.

Consideration Three: Nature of Work Interdependence

An important consideration in structuring a performance appraisal system is the nature of the work conducted in an organization. One component of the nature of work is the degree to which workers have to rely on each other to accomplish their tasks. This can be termed the degree of interdependence among the workers.

Different work groups show different degrees of interdependence. Sales people, for example, are independently responsible for their tasks of selling products to customers. Professional and craft occupations that are responsible for serving one client or customer at one point in time also have low levels of interdependence.

Teaching, however, is an occupation in which the level of interdependence is high. In teaching, the "product" of education is not something that one teacher gives to one student at one point in time. Rather it is something that students acquire over many years, as they pass from classroom to classroom, grade to grade, and building to building. Teachers in junior high, for example, are dependent on the educational experiences that teachers in elementary schools provide students. Teachers are also dependent on each other to maintain consistent policies, such as homework and discipline practices, from classroom to classroom.[4]

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[4]This point of view may seem inconsistent with what some observers call a "professional model of schools" in which teachers are seen as independently responsible for identifying

This interdependency means that the "product" of schools, effective education, depends on cooperation among teachers and open sharing of information. To the degree that the school organization's performance appraisal system interferes with that cooperation, such a system is dysfunctional to the organization.

The best example of a dysfunctional system is merit pay. Merit pay forces employees to play a "zero-sum" compensation game in which one employee cannot earn significantly more without decreasing the amount of money that other employees can be paid (Bacharach, et al, 1984). Merit pay is based on the assumption that to motivate teachers to improve their performance, each teacher must compete with every other teacher in the school for a fixed "pot" of money. Many career ladders are also zero-sum in nature, since they specify that teachers must compete for a limited number of job positions. Of course, under such systems, teachers recognize that they are competing for a fixed and scarce number of rewards, and view each other's competence as threats to their income security. This undermines the cooperation necessary to effective education.

Thus:

Schools should structure performance appraisal systems that encourage cooperative efforts among teachers.

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and addressing student needs. We would argue that this is an argument for teacher discretion in determining how they carry out their tasks and is not inconsistent with the notion that the work of teachers is interdependent in accomplishing the primary tasks of the organization.

Implication: Teacher Cooperation

To the degree that performance appraisal is a cooperative process, the interdependent work efforts of teachers are enhanced. There are two ways that districts could encourage teacher cooperation in performance appraisal. The first involves the elimination of quota systems for allocating rewards, and the second involves building peer teams for skill development purposes.

First, it is critical that if a district ties organizational rewards to performance appraisal, the district should attempt to allocate sufficient funds to reward all who qualify. Thus, if performance appraisal is linked to promotion, districts should avoid placing a quota on the number of teachers who may receive a promotion.

Some would argue that the total avoidance of quotas is unrealistic because teachers can't generate more money for the school organization. Therefore, reward distribution must be zero-sum in nature. It should be pointed out, however, that the specification of a developmental period for formative growth preceding summative promotion decisions eases that situation (see "skill development" section). Specifying that the pre-tenure period should be a developmental period for growth -- in which teachers would not be evaluated summatively until the end of that period -- would allow school organizations to appraise a

smaller number of teachers for summative purposes. As such, the use of a developmental period for growth has an important practical advantage, in addition to the advantage of explicitly focusing the appraisal process on improvement, rather than on constant judgements and surveillances of performance.

With regard to the second method of increasing cooperation, the use of peer teams for purposes of formative appraisal might encourage teachers to view each other as potential allies, rather than competitors. A team, as opposed to a single "mentor" would provide a teacher with multiple inputs for pinpointing strengths and weaknesses as well as reinforce collegial ties among teachers.

As noted previously, these formative appraisers might take on a "quasi-summative" role when it comes to a teacher's promotion decision. The peer team could act as advocates for a teacher's promotion, with the administrator retaining the final authority for the promotion decision.

Under such a system, the peer team would not have an active role to play in initiating summative appraisals or in blocking consideration of a teacher for promotion. In practice, of course, it would be difficult for a teacher to secure a promotion without the active endorsement of his/her peer team. The opposite side of the coin, however, is that it would be difficult for the summative appraiser(s) to reject a promotion, if and when

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Alabama has in the past year passed legislation that specifies the pre-tenure period as a period of development for beginning teachers. The decision to grant tenure is seen as a "summative" promotion decision.

those who have worked closely with a teacher do give such endorsements. But having formative appraiser(s) choose between active endorsement and passive silence would:

(a) preserve the authority (and responsibility) of administrators for summative appraisal -- and therefore not disrupt the authority structure of the school itself;

(b) preserve the individual teacher's right to secure a summative decision from those who have final responsibility for making those decisions, if he or she feels confident that a case for a positive decision can be made; and

(c) emphasize that the specific role of the peer team would be to provide formative assistance for helping individual teachers become ready for promotion.

Summary

This section summarizes the points concerning the structure of performance appraisal that have been made in this paper. A proposed structure of performance appraisal in education is shown in Exhibit 1.

The diagram depicts performance appraisal as a process occurring over time. There are two primary time periods in teaching: the pre-tenure period and the post-tenure period. The granting of tenure separates these two periods of time.

The proposed structure calls for a focus on skill development during the pre-tenure period. In this context, formative appraisal is critically important. We have argued that it is appropriate for a teachers' peers to provide this assistance.

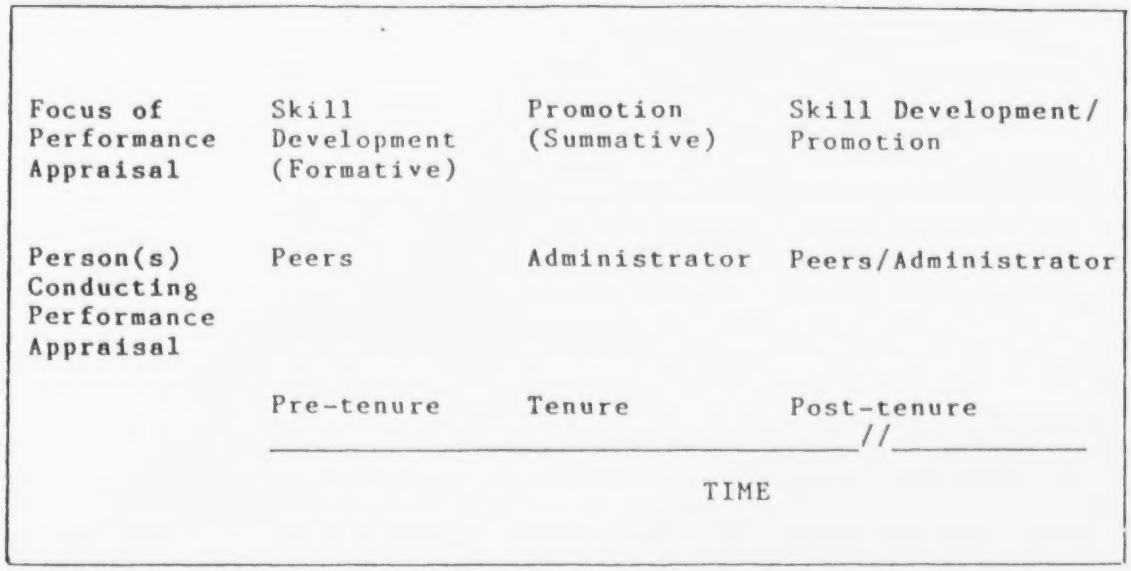

Exhibit 1. Proposed Structure of Teacher Performance Appraisal System

given the interdependent work context of teaching and the need to promote cooperative modes of skill assistance.

The decision to grant tenure is a summative promotion decision. The focus of performance appraisal at this point is on whether or not a teacher has acquired specific teaching skills. We have proposed that the school administrator could retain the authority for such promotion decisions, but that the peer team, by acting as advocates for a teacher's promotion, could influence the promotion decision.

Following the decision to grant tenure, there may be further periods of development and further promotion decisions. A teacher's peers could continue to assist with formative appraisal, and administrators could make further promotion decisions.

Conclusion

Researchers who have examined performance appraisal in private sector organizations have long stressed that performance appraisal is a difficult task with many obstacles. Bernardin and Beatty (1984) note that research has produced only a small list of recommendations on ways of avoiding these obstacles. In this paper, we have tried to show that only by examining the nature of the work and the structure of the performance appraisal system can we begin to overcome these obstacles.

The strategic considerations outlined above reveal three areas of emphasis for performance appraisal in schools. First, performance appraisal should concentrate on teachers' level of skill. To this end, a developmental period for formative growth becomes critically important. Second, if a school district links organizational rewards with performance appraisal, it should attempt to ease the potential conflicts that occur. To reduce these conflicts, it is suggested that school districts should:

(a) address the separate processes of formative and summative appraisal; and

(b) specify that different person(s) serve as formative and summative appraisers.

Finally, to promote teacher cooperation and enhance the interdependent efforts of teachers, districts should:

(a) reduce the occurrence of "zero-sum" compensation games, by avoiding quota systems in allocating rewards; and

(b) encourage teachers to facilitate each other's formative

growth by providing peer assistance.

State political and educational leaders who have advocated "merit pay" and "career ladder" legislation have given little consideration to how conflicts in appraising individuals can be lessened. On the whole, they have paid too little attention to lessons from the private sector concerning inter-worker cooperation, reward systems and performance appraisals.

If we are to learn anything from the private sector, it is that monolithic solutions rarely work. Rather, each change must be strategically considered as to the ripple effects it would have throughout the educational system. In education, in too many states we have advocated merit pay or career ladders without seriously examining their implications for the type of performance appraisal that will have to be put in place. This failure will inevitably doom all these efforts to change the compensation and career structure of teachers.

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